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Sent: Monday, March 06, 2006 3:16 PM  
To: MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov  
Subject: MLPAComments: promoting sustainability in marine ecosystems

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Santa Clara, CA 95053  
March 3, 2006

MLPA Initiative  
c/o California Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Blue Ribbon Task Force:

It has come to my attention that your committee is dedicated to evaluating new locations for proposed marine protected areas (MPA's). I know that the committee is composed of citizens with various conflicting interests, but I believe there is a common interest inherent in all citizens as well. My goal is not to nitpick the borders proposed in the different packages; I would like to share insight as to why MPA's are so valuable and why package #2 is the best option.

I am currently taking a class called Faith, Ethics, and the Biodiversity Crisis in which we have been studying religious, spiritual, ethical, environmental, and scientific topics relevant to the current rapid loss of biodiversity. This class evaluates life with a multidisciplinary lens, paying particular attention to local marine areas. We have had many discussions about the complex influences currently affecting ecosystems; evaluating economic, scientific, social, and religious paradigms and how they play a role in ecosystem health and conservation. Our society and economy have reaped major benefits that our ecosystems and environment have provided. One of the main reasons we are a global power and role model is our resource abundance, but if we continue to harvest at the same unchecked and unabated rate of consumption, our progress and health will decline rapidly in the future. Our finite resources are already beginning to show us the repercussions of our recent exponential explosion in consumption. Creating MPA's is an opportunity to promote the health and diversity of many marine species. These small but important regions will play a vital role in the re-growth and assessment of many exhausted and threatened species.

As an Environmental Science major, I am beginning to realize some of the complex relationships and important roles within ecosystems. Ecosystems are run by very dynamic interactions where every species acts as a check and balance to others. When one or more key species are removed, the health and balance of the whole ecosystem is threatened. A perfect example relating to marine ecosystems is the population decline of sea otters which highlights the complexity of marine ecosystems' interdependencies. One of the species the otter eats, and therefore regulates, is the sea urchin. As the Otter population dwindled to a state where it was no longer able to fulfill its role in the ecosystem, the urchin's population grew unchecked. The urchins began to consume more and more of the kelp forest, which is a key habitat to many other marine species. This sequence of events shows how interconnected and interdependent the relationships that maintain ecosystems health and stability are. !

The removal of one predator affected the lively hood of an entire ecosystem. We have been disturbing many regions where we have little knowledge of the ranging affects and consequences that our actions will cause. One of the provisions in the MLPA is to improve educational and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems. The larger the area preserved by the MPA's, the more valuable an educational tool they will become.

Aside from science, which many skeptics say is often limited in its ability to give concrete insight or reasonable predictions of the future, there are many other reasons why we should protect our oceans and marine life. If you are a religious person you may be familiar with the scripture of Genesis, which gives an account of creation. To sum up the scripture in very few words; God creates the world and says it is good. He also calls the creation humans dominion. If we are to reasonably evaluate this scripture, we could conclude that all of God's creation is good, as He said it is, then any harm done to it is desecrating God's gift to us. Also, the word dominion is key here. This term is not related to domination, or submission. By calling the creation man's dominion, God places man as stewards and protectors of His gift. As stewards, we must ensure that the health and integrity of the creation is protected. In the recent past, we have been over-fishing, over-harvesti!

ng, and polluting the ocean with little regard to the damaging consequences. We have been failing as stewards of a healthy creation. To use a monetary metaphor, we have been taking money out of the bank instead of living off the interest. If we want to maintain our role as a major world leader, we need to change our perception of the ocean and the important role it plays as a main component and contributor to biodiversity and our health. The ocean is seen as a resource that is out there for anyone willing to pursue it. Some conservation progress has been made, but it has been slowed mainly by short-term economic benefits. If our goal is to continue living at our current level of health and comfort, we must be supported by healthy ecosystems; to ensure this we must try to protect and save as much of the ocean as possible, because healthy ecosystems means productive resources which in turn leads to healthy living for us.

I realize that many community members in the fishing industry are worried about loosing their jobs due to the creation of MPA's and no take zones, but if fishing is to continue without regulation or a better understanding of the actual damage that we are causing, we may loose many marine species the fishing industry, and our livelihood, depends on. What will the fisherman do then? I am not for stopping fishing altogether; I think we need to better assess and understand the full extent of our actions before we continue to worsen the situation and end up with irreversible damage. Now is the time for us to evaluate our situation so that we may better plan for the future livelihood of our country, our fishing industry, and our oceans. With larger MPA's that package #2 provides for, we will have a greater and more productive area to study and learn more about the dynamic interactions of marine ecosystems so that we may be able to make healthier decisions in the future.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts and concerns, I hope you take them into consideration while deciding the new MPA regions.

Sincerely,

Peter Thamer